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SUBJECT: INL A/S PATTERSON MEETS WITH REINTEGRATION CZAR
FRANK PEARL

Classified By: CDA Milton Drucker.
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) In a February 1 meeting, Reintegration Commissioner Frank Pearl told INL A/S Anne Patterson of his efforts to increase the program's credibility in Colombia and with the international community. He noted the GOC pays 96 percent of the Reintegration Program's budget, while the international community pays 4 percent. His office will launch a Capital Investment Fund with the support of Bill Gates on March 19 in Cartagena to raise funds for reintegration. Pearl warned, however, disintegration of the former paramilitary network was going to be much more complex and take longer than anticipated. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) On February 1, INL A/S Anne Patterson, USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator Mark Silverman, ONDCP Deputy Director James O'Gara, INL Office Director for Latin American Programs Tony Arias, WHA/AND Director Phil French, CDA Milton Drucker, U.S. Embassy AID Director Liliana Ayalde and PolOff (notetaker) met with Reintegration Commissioner Frank Pearl. Pearl was accompanied by his advisor Maria Eugenia Pinto.

Overcoming Prior Missteps and Obstacles

¶3. (C) Pearl, who has been in charge of the Reintegration Program since September 2006, said he assumed the position with the understanding he would first evaluate the old program to identify bottlenecks and make corrections. Overall, he recognized the design of the original program for the demobilized populations was good, but its implementation was weak. The program offered five basic services, which included a monthly living stipend; healthcare access; occupational/educational training; psychological support; and financial aid for business ventures. Indicative of the lack of proper implementation, over two-thirds of the demobilized paramilitaries did not receive any of the services being offered.

¶4. (C) Pearl explained his office has already implemented several fixes to the problems, which included lack of coordination among agencies; inadequate identification for the demobilized; apathy from local mayors and governors to engage in the reintegration process; no centralized database system; and inadequate orientation for the ex-paramilitaries' development of business plans. He outlined some fixes:

- There was lack of coordination among the various GOC entities offering services, which were offered sporadically, and monthly stipends were provided regardless of participation in the program. Pearl's office is now overseeing all services being offered and requires the demobilized to follow certain steps to obtain program benefits.
- At least half of the demobilized did not have proper identification, which limited their ability to apply for jobs or obtain basic services. Pearl's office is trying to facilitate issuance of the documentation.
- The failure to prepare local mayors and governors for the reincorporation of the former combatants led to poor reception and even rejection by receptor communities. Pearl's office has reached out to mayors and governors to help them understand the importance of reintegration. (Over 60 percent of demobilized paramilitaries returned to Antioquia, Cordoba, Magdalena, and Cesar departments and over 75 percent were concentrated in 53 municipalities.)
- Over 30 different databases with information on ex-combatants existed and no database linked all the information available on the demobilized. The only reliable database was the Tracking, Monitoring and Evaluation System (SAME), which was USAID sponsored and operated by International Organization for Migration (IOM). An agreement with Microsoft Corporation has been signed to develop a centralized and integrated system to track and manage the demobilized, which would build on the USAID-funded SAME and would help provide accountability for each dollar spent.
- The demobilized paramilitaries' expectation of immediate economic benefits and financial assistance for reintegrating led to the false hope of becoming entrepreneurs overnight. Not surprisingly, most of the productive projects initially funded by the Peace Commissioner's Office -- 130 of the 152 projects presented)- were rejected because they lacked due diligence research on products, markets, costs, and land ownership. Furthermore, the origins of the capital investment in many projects appeared questionable. The new plan is to guide ex-paramilitaries throughout the business plan process.

Strategies to Improve Credibility

¶5. (C) Pearl explained that one of his immediate goals is to increase the credibility of the program in Colombia and with the international community through the following initiatives:

- Centralize and facilitate public access to information. In addition, a national communication strategy will soon begin.
- The "one-size-fits-all" approach will change to a more tailored process for each demobilized and region. The program will build psychological, educational and occupational profiles on each individual.
- The program is in the process of making sure that all former combatants have on file current contact information, civilian documentation, and national health registration. The program will ensure all demobilized complete their initial interview with the Prosecutor General's Office (Fiscalia), and sign an agreement with the Reintegration Program to ensure all demobilized complete their requirements

and obligations. This process is expected to be completed in May 2007.

- The Reintegration Program is extending benefits beyond the original 18 or 24 months as long as the demobilized meets his/her responsibilities in the program. Participation in counseling, education and training programs will be a requirement for the living stipend benefit. Moreover, the program plans to change the payment system by requiring each former combatant open a bank account and use an ATM card, which could help in tracking them better.

- The program plans to decentralize its staff and services. By May 2007, the program will open 20 more Centers for Reference and Opportunities (CROs), for a total of 29, in anticipation of an increase in demand for the services being offered. All CROs will be equipped, staffed and supported by counseling, educational and training programs.

- The Reintegration Program is strengthening coordination with the Police and the Ministry of Defense regarding those former combatants not participating in the program as required. The program is also working with the National Commission for Reconciliation and Reparations (CNRR in Spanish) on truth, justice, reconciliation, and the "guarantee of no repetition" initiatives.

- With private sector support, the Reintegration Program is creating a Peace Building Fund, which will provide scholarships and other financial contributions to the program, and a Capital Investment Fund that will provide funding for productive activities of former combatants. Private companies will be encouraged to contribute to the

fund as well as participate in managing and directing it. (President Uribe met with U.S. and Colombian companies on February 1-2 in Colombia to promote and encourage contributions to the fund.) The Reintegration Program already has a commitment of support from the Bill Gates Foundation and expects to launch the Capital Investment Fund with the support of Bill Gates himself on March 19 in Cartagena.

GOC Pays 96 Percent of Budget

¶6. (C) Pearl noted the GOC pays 96 percent of the program's budget, while the international community pays 4 percent. The main international contributors are the U.S. and Holland.

In early January, Pearl visited several European countries to increase program support. E.U. countries that have expressed interest in the program include Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. However, these countries have primarily expressed interest in supporting the "soft side" of the program, such as the work with communities and child soldiers.

Paramilitary Network More Complex, Rearmament a Reality

¶7. (C) Pearl said the peace process offered armed and non-armed paramilitaries the opportunity to exchange their former lifestyle for legal and financial benefits that most members were unwilling to forgo. Pearl warned, however, disintegration of the former paramilitary network was going to be much more complex and take longer than anticipated. Pearl explained the number of paramilitaries who demobilized was much higher than expected because the paramilitary structure was not only composed of an armed wing, but also a logistics, financial, administrative, and communications network. Therefore, successful reintegration of all these individuals not only includes a gradual change in their values, but also requires intense work with the receptor communities.

¶8. (C) Pearl said rearmament is a reality, and time is not

on the GOC's side. The reintegration process for the estimated 2,500 mid-ranking ex-paramilitary leaders was much harder since the program did not previously offer any major incentives for this group, a challenge Pearl intended to address by targeting their specific needs. Pearl emphasized that tailoring reintegration programs to the specific demobilized skills and backgrounds could more effectively encourage them to reintegrate back into society, while dismantling their old power structures.

¶9. (SBU) A/S Patterson did not have the opportunity to clear this cable before her departure.

DRUCKER